

Typical Audit Questions

The following are typical food safety audit questions. These are the same questions that will appear in Create a Food Safety Manual.

General Requirements

- Do you have a written food safety policy?
- Is there a person(s) at your farm who has responsibility and authority for food safety?
- Are you aware that documentation is required to demonstrate that your food safety plan is being followed?
- Do you have a written product traceability program in place?
- Do you have a written recall procedure?
- Do you have a documented corrective action procedure?
- Has training in traceback, recall and corrective action procedures been documented for relevant personnel?

Worker Health and Hygiene

- Are all portable or fixed toilet facilities and hand washing stations kept clean and well supplied?
- Are your toilet facilities easily accessible to employees?
- Are your field sanitation units/portable toilets designed, constructed, and located to minimize the risk of product contamination?
- Are sewage and septic systems maintained to prevent contamination to fields or produce?
- In the event of a leakage or spill, do you have a plan for immediate control and treatment of contamination from sewage/waste liquids?
- Are all your employees aware that they need to wash their hands, with the correct technique for hand washing, before starting work, after using the toilet, after each break, before harvesting or engaging in post-harvest activities, after using a handkerchief/tissue and at any other times when their hands might become a source of contamination?
- Have all your employees been trained in the proper use of toilet facilities?
- Do you have a written policy covering protective clothing requirements (including hair covering, jewelry and artificial nail restrictions if any)?
- Do you use gloves at your farm (disposable or re-useable)?
- Do you have clearly designated areas where employees can take breaks and which are located away from produce fields and handling/packing areas?
- Are all employees and visitors aware that eating, drinking (other than potable water for field employees), spitting, chewing gum and using tobacco is only allowed in these clearly designated break areas?
- Are all employees and visitors aware that if they show signs of illness they need to restrict their direct contact with produce or food-contact surfaces?
- Are all employees aware that they need to restrict their direct contact with produce or food-contact surfaces if they have an open sore or lesion that cannot be effectively covered?
- Are all employees (and visitors) aware that they need to seek prompt treatment for cuts, abrasions and other injuries?
- Do you have a policy outlining handling/disposal of food or food contact surfaces that have been in contact with blood or other bodily fluids?
- Have your worker health and hygiene training and activities above been documented for all your employees?

Previous Land Use and Site Selection

- Have you performed an initial assessment of the risks associated with previous land use?
- Did you perform any preventive and/or corrective measures as a result of your land use risk assessment?

Agricultural Water

- Do you use water for field use (e.g., water used in the growing environment, for example in irrigation, cooling, frost protection or as a carrier for fertilizers and pesticides)?
- Is your water distribution system constructed so that human or animal waste systems are not cross-connected with agricultural water systems?
- Have you performed a risk assessment for your distribution system and all water source(s) to determine if they are adequate for their intended use? This assessment must be documented.
- Do you have an ongoing water management plan to ensure that the water quality at your farm remains adequate for its intended use?
- Does your water risk assessment, current industry standards and/or prevailing regulations for the commodities being grown require that water testing be performed as part of your ongoing management plan?
- Have activities associated with your water management plan been documented?

Agricultural Chemicals

- Do you use agricultural chemicals (e.g., pesticides such as herbicides, fungicides and insecticides, synthetic fertilizers)?
- Do you have a procedure for cleaning application equipment and for disposal of waste agricultural chemicals so that production and growing areas are protected against contamination?
- Are the people that apply chemicals suitably trained?
- Do you maintain a record of chemical use?

Animals and Pest Control

- Do you perform a risk assessment for animal activity (domestic and wild) in and around your growing area(s)?
- Do you routinely monitor animal activity in and around the growing area during the growing season?
- Do you have buildings associated with production of produce at your farm (e.g., packinghouse, storage, cooling areas, etc.)?

Soil Amendments and Manure

- Do you use soil amendments at your operation (soil amendments include raw, partially treated and treated manure, compost, compost teas, fertilizers, biosolids etc.)?
- Do you use soil amendments which do not contain raw or partially treated manure?
- Do you use treated compost (plant and/or animal based) or compost teas (made from treated compost)?
- Do you produce any compost yourself or compost tea from your own compost?
- For animal based soil amendments which do not contain raw or partially treated manure, do you keep records of composition, dates of treatment (if applicable), methods used and application dates and rates?

- Do you use soil amendments that contain raw or incompletely treated manure or biosolids?
- Do you store your soil amendments so they do not become a source of contamination of produce or the surrounding environment?

Field Harvesting

- Prior to harvest, do you check the area for any possible sources of contamination (physical, chemical, or biological risks)?
- Do you have a list of equipment (e.g. vehicles, tools, utensils and other items) which may pose a risk of contamination to produce during normal operation?
- Do you have scheduled repair, cleaning, sanitizing, storage and handling procedures for food contact surfaces to reduce contamination risks during harvest activities?
- Do you use water tanks such as those used for dust control (the water from which may contact produce in the field)?
- Do you use vehicles/production equipment in your fields which may pose a risk of contamination to produce (e.g. vehicles which use fuel, oil, or hydraulic fluids)?
- Do you have a written policy indicating that foreign objects (glass, plastic, metal or other debris) should be excluded from production equipment wherever possible?
- Do you have a written policy regarding containers, bins and packaging materials used for harvesting?
- During harvesting activities do you use water/ice in direct contact with product or food contact surfaces, such as in the field, as the final wash step prior to consumer packaging, or as a cooling aid in a consumer package?
- Do you have a documented procedure(s) addressing that only sound produce (appropriate for its intended use) is harvested and that produce that has been damaged to an extent that it may be a microbial hazard is not harvested or is culled?
- Do you have a written policy covering produce handling and storage post-harvest (post-harvest in this case means after harvest but before further processing)?
- Has training in your policies and procedures for field harvesting been documented for all relevant employees?

Transportation (Field to Packinghouse)

- Do you use vehicles, carts, trailers, etc. (i.e. shipping units) for transporting produce from the field to packinghouse or customer?
- Do you have written procedures for produce loading and unloading which outline practices to minimize damage and contamination?
- Do you have a requirement for temperature control during transport to ensure food safety?
- Has training in your vehicle policy (i.e. assessment of suitability for transporting produce), if applicable, and loading/unloading procedures been documented for all designated employees?

Packinghouse Activities

- Do you use raw materials in the packinghouse such as packaging, chemicals/sanitizers other raw materials?
- Do you receive raw product from external sources (e.g. not affiliated with your farm) for processing in your packinghouse?
- Do you have a storage area for non-product and packaging materials which minimizes risk of contamination?
- Do you have a written policy regarding storage, inspection, handling and proper use of food contact containers and bins for packinghouse activities?

- Does your packinghouse design help minimize contamination risks (e.g., ease of cleaning)?
- Do you have toilet facilities within your packinghouse?
- Do you use equipment lubricants in the packinghouse?
- Do you have a Preventative Maintenance and/or Master Cleaning Schedule with associated procedures for your packinghouse building?
- Are equipment and tools used for cleaning kept clean, in good working condition and stored properly away from product handling areas?
- Are all food-contact equipment, tools and utensils used in the packinghouse designed and made of materials that can be easily cleaned and maintained?
- Do you use water/ice in contact with product or food contact surfaces in packinghouse activities?
- Do you have a description of the water distribution system for packinghouse use?
- Do you wash your produce?
- Do you use antimicrobial chemicals in your wash water?
- Do you use instruments to measure temperature, pH, antimicrobial levels and/or use other important devices used to monitor variables that impact food safety?
- Is microbial testing by an external lab performed on your product(s) or water?
- Do you cool your produce to ensure food safety (e.g. hydrocoolers, air coolers, chilled storage areas)?
- Do you use packaging materials for finished products?
- Does your packinghouse facility process produce that may contain allergens?
- Has training in your policies and procedures for packinghouse activities been documented for all applicable employees?

Final Product Transport

- Do you have a written policy to verify cleanliness and suitability of vehicle cargo bays/shipping units used to transport produce from the packinghouse to customers?
- Do you have written procedures for produce loading and unloading which outline practices to minimize damage and contamination?
- Do you have transport temperature ranges documented for applicable commodities, and is this information accessible to those transporting the product(s)?
- Has training in your vehicle policy (i.e. assessment of suitability for transporting produce), loading/unloading procedures and refrigerated transport policies/requirements (as applicable) been documented for all relevant employees?